

The Central Catalog of Volunteer-transcribed Textbooks and Children's Literature Books

By Carl W. Lappin*

The Central Catalog of volunteer-produced textbooks and children's literature books which is maintained, in card-file form only, at the American Printing House for the Blind, Louisville, Kentucky, has become a valuable source of information for the benefit of transcribers, school administrators, teachers, librarians, students, parents, and all workers for the blind who have need for materials in Braille, large type, disc- or tape-recorded form.

From rather modest beginnings, as a list of hand-transcribed Braille textbooks available for loan or reproduction by the Thermoform process, the catalog has grown so rapidly that one familiar with its day-to-day operation hesitates to project the eventual size of this listing. This constant change makes it impossible to maintain the listing in any form other than the single, card-file index presently maintained at APH (Spring 1965). This catalog contains some 16,000 completed titles and 5,000 reports for titles in process, covering books in Braille, large type, disc- and tape-recorded form. The daily growth of the listing is caused primarily by two factors: the steady growth and increased productivity of volunteer transcribing groups all over the country, and more efficient and conscientious reporting by these groups of work completed and in process. The one thing that can be said with certainty about all of this activity is that it is not likely to lessen.

The purpose of the Central Catalog is two-fold:

(1) To make possible a single service which will, on the one hand, coordinate the reporting efforts of all agencies, groups, and individuals producing literature for the blind on a volunteer basis, and, at the same time, make possible a single point of reference for schools, students, and blind readers in need of a particular educational title; and

(2) Provide for the clearance and recording of permissions from ink-print publishers through blanket agreements which the publishers have extended.

The Catalog has now reached a point of growth and stability where it can be considered amply capable of fulfilling the reference functions. However, as it exists within the confines of the APH, the Catalog is no more than a reporting service whose usefulness depends entirely on the full cooperation of all volunteer groups and professional agencies. Proper and prompt reporting procedures are the essence of the whole operation.

Similarly, the vital function of clearing and recording of permissions to reproduce is wholly dependent upon proper and prompt application for such permissions, to be granted through the blanket arrangements with the publishers. This part of the program was launched in 1962 through agreements with publishers jointly negotiated by the Library of Congress, Recording for the Blind, and the American Printing House for the Blind. The original arrange-

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ment was made with the members of the American Textbook Publishers Institute for the reproduction of their textbook publications in Braille, large type and disc-and tape-recorded form. Subsequently, the same arrangements have been made with the Association of American University Presses. Additionally, the members of the Children's Book Council have granted blanket permissions for the publication of their children's literature books only. Several individual publishers who are not members of the above organizations grant the same blanket permission, as well. Lists of the publishers granting blanket permissions are available from APH on request.

All agreements with the publishers have been made on the basis that permission records will be kept at the American Printing House *for every transcription made*. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that reports be made to the APH, where the records are kept, and that no book should be transcribed unless permission has been received from APH, or directly from the publisher when the blanket permissions are not applicable. *Note:* Anthologies of all types are *excluded* from the blanket permissions; each title in such collections must be cleared with the individual publisher direct.

Transcribers should not write to any of these publishers or to APH for permission to transcribe; rather, the submission of an Intention Report to APH is the only thing a transcriber must do to obtain permission for any books covered under blanket agreements. This arrangement eliminates paper work for publisher, transcriber, and APH.

Free samples of ink-print books should not be requested of publishers. It is felt that publishers who grant permission for use of their materials are aiding our cause, and should not be asked for a copy of the book that is to be transcribed. These should be purchased by the person or agency.

The Catalog, which is maintained in card-index form, is in two major sections: (1) transcriptions in process, listed from Intention Reports submitted to the Printing House; (2) completed transcriptions, listed from Completion Reports. The file of Intention Reports includes *all* titles which have been reported to APH as in process, regardless of whether or not they are textbooks or trade (i.e., fiction and supplementary reading) books. When a Completion Report is received, the Intention Report is removed from the file and a completion card is made. If the title is a textbook, this card is filed under the proper subject heading in the Catalog. If the title is not a textbook, but a trade book, the completion card is made and forwarded to the Library of Congress, Division for the Blind, Washington, D.C., where a comparable catalog of general books is maintained as: "The Union Catalog of Hand-copied Books." All reports on Catholic texts are sent to Xavier Society for the Blind, 154 East 23rd Street, New York, New York; therefore, the quickest way to check on a Catholic edition is to write to the Xavier Society.

Before reporting a book to APH, transcribers (individual or groups) should check its availability in current published catalogs like those listed below.

Printed catalogs available on request include:

Catalogs

1. American Printing House for the Blind, Inc., 1839 Frankfort Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40206. (Braille, Large Type, Talking Book, and Braille Music)
2. Peninsula Braille Transcribers Guild, 340 N. Ellsworth Avenue, San Mateo, California. (Braille and Tape)
3. Volunteer Transcribing Service, 617 Oregon Avenue, San Mateo, California. (Large Type, Tape and Braille)
4. Recording for the Blind, Inc., 215

East 58th Street, New York, New York 10022. (Disc Recordings)

5. National Aid to the Visually Handicapped, 3201 Balboa Street, San Francisco, California. (Large Type)

6. Stanwix House, Inc., 3020 Chartiers Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15204. (Large Type)

7. Argosy Recording Club, C/o The National Braille Press, 88 St. Stephen Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02115. (Recordings)

8. Howe Press of the Perkins School for the Blind, 175 N. Beacon Street, Watertown, Massachusetts 02172. (Braille Music)

9. Jewish Guild for the Blind, 1880 Broadway, New York, New York 10023. (Braille)

Card Reference Listings

1. Library of Congress, Division for the Blind, Washington, D.C. 20040. (Tape and Braille)

2. Xavier Society for the Blind, 154 East 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010. (Card-file index of Catholic textbooks only; Braille, Large Type and Recordings)

If the book is not available from any of the above sources in the form desired, an inquiry should be made to the Printing House, by letter or postcard, asking whether it is available elsewhere, and specifying the exact title, author, publisher, latest copyright date, and school grade level. School grade level is most important for elementary school textbook titles. The media needed is also very important. The above is the minimum information required in order to give correct reference service. All inquiries receive immediate attention. If a title has been previously transcribed, the APH will provide the address of the depository, or, if the book is currently being transcribed somewhere, the

name and address of the transcribing group. An inquiry can then be made as to whether the book is available for loan or for copying. The few minutes spent by a group or a transcriber in carrying out this step can save many, many hours of unnecessary transcribing and make for full use of any single transcription. This same procedure is followed when an Intention Report is received. All efforts must be made to cut down on duplication of titles for the benefit of transcribers. Nothing is more discouraging than for a transcriber to prepare a book in several volumes and then discover that a hand-transcribed copy of this book is lying on a shelf somewhere else catching dust, or is available in press-printed form at APH or elsewhere.

If no duplication exists, an Intention Report should be submitted on forms which are available on request from the Printing House. Each pad of report forms includes an instruction sheet. Transcribers are directed to send an Intention Report to APH when they start their transcription; when the book is finished, the transcriber should send one Completed report to APH and another to the state or local depository. Care should be taken to complete these forms IN FULL, including permission information. Instructions concerning the blanket permission for American Textbook Publishers Institute, Association of American University Presses, and Children's Book Council are also available at APH. If a book is being transcribed regardless of duplications, this should be so stated on the Intention Report, to avoid unnecessary correspondence.

Each intention card is placed on file at the Printing House and remains a part of our records until a Completion Report is received. The transcribing group should file the Completed Report as soon as the transcription is completed in order to keep the Catalog up to date. Every item on the form should be completed. The second

Completed Report should go to the state or local depository, unless otherwise directed by an official of your State Department of Special Education.

I have summarized reporting procedures in some detail because, unless these procedures are followed systematically by *all* transcribers, the Catalog cannot be used efficiently. Much progress has been made since 1963, but there are undoubtedly a considerable number of completed transcriptions which have never been reported to the Printing House. Many transcriptions are still reported late or incompletely. A good deal of time is wasted in securing information which should have been reported automatically. All too many transcribing groups fail to acknowledge letters from APH giving reference service and requesting that we be notified if a transcription is to be cancelled or continued. Sending this information by postcard would make the Central Catalog files more accurate.

Since the human tendency is to continue work once it is under way, the APH instituted the procedure outlined above of requesting an informal report of the availability of a title prior to submitting an Intention Report and assignment of a book to a transcriber. If this procedure is followed, it should eliminate unnecessary duplication. When one contemplates the needs of blind students all over the country, he is appalled at the hours of valuable time which are wasted as a result of a simple failure in communication. Every completed book which sits unused in one locality while transcribers in another are busy duplicating it represents a tragic and unnecessary waste.

Needed materials must be carefully checked in current catalogs to determine whether a book is available from one of the standard sources of supply. These catalogs are generally available on request or can be consulted locally at the offices of those professionally concerned with serv-

ices for the blind. Too many books which are already available are requested in hand-transcribed form because the student, parent, or teacher would prefer not to pay for them. Braille, large type and recorded books are not inexpensive, but neither are time and materials of volunteer transcribers. It is an imposition to use these valuable services merely to save an individual a few dollars rather than to provide some student with a book which otherwise would not be obtainable at all.

It is imperative that all inquiries to the APH contain full information about the book desired; therefore, I repeat, please give full title; names of authors; publishers; series title and edition, if any; copyright date; and school grade level. Because of the frequency with which ink-print textbooks are revised, all of this information is essential if we are to give correct reference service. It is also important to check alternate copyright dates which may still be usable. Between major revisions, publishers may update textbooks through minor changes which result in new copyright dates. Such editions, more often than not, can be used in class without serious difficulty, if the alternative is to be without a book or to tie up a transcriber's time for the sake of a minor change.

It is to everyone's advantage that inquiries be sent in before the last minute. Here at APH we answer all inquiries promptly, generally on the day they are received. However, even with commendable promptness of all concerned, it takes time to complete the cycle which may result in a depositor in Maine shipping a book to a student in California. It takes even longer if it turns out that the book is being used and arrangements must then be made to have it hand-transcribed. Those who use the Catalog cannot afford to worry in August about books that will be needed in September.

Many State and local depositories are now being set up. These depositories,

whether in schools or state or local agencies, have the responsibility of replying promptly to requests for the loan of books and for making them available if they are not in use locally. This is the payoff phase of the entire operation; the rest of the system is of no use if it does not function at this point. For various reasons, a large number of books listed in the Catalog lie unused because the holders are reluctant to ship them out. Sometimes this is because of unfortunate prior experiences with borrowers who failed to return books or returned them in bad shape: understandable hesitation, which borrowers can help to overcome by exercising care and by returning books promptly when they have finished with them. Needless to say, depositories are short of personnel to perform this service and at times are victims of indolence. Many volunteers are willing to help in this phase of the work, if requested. Whatever the cause, a book which is not loaned is one which must be duplicated elsewhere.

As a bit of general instruction, first check available published catalogs and local depositories. Next, check with APH Central Catalog for textbooks and children's literature books, or with the Library of Congress, Division for the Blind, Washington, D.C., for trade books (fiction and general works). Catholic textbooks should be checked through the Xavier Society for the Blind, 154 East 23rd Street, New York,

New York. For college textbooks, check first with Recording for the Blind, 215 East 58th Street, New York, New York, and then with APH for any other listings. Inquiries about courses for transcribers and proofreaders should be sent to the Library of Congress, Division for the Blind. The Intention and original Completion Reports for all books must be sent to APH, with the carbon copy of the completion form sent to the state or local depository if there is one.

This, then, is the Central Catalog of Volunteer Transcribed Textbooks and Children's Literature Books, an instrument which performs a unique and invaluable service.

It must be remembered that the Catalog is only an instrument, and that its usefulness depends entirely on the cooperation and interest of all concerned. The Printing House can and does provide an up-to-date compilation of all titles reported to it, and an immediate reference service. Without the active cooperation of transcribers, depositories, and borrowers, this service is nothing more than a time-consuming, and *expensive*, bit of paper work at the Printing House.

The American Printing House serves only as coordinator. The actual service is provided by those whose activity the Catalog codifies. Our mutual aim is to provide needed reading materials to visually impaired people.